

Darwin pack

On the eve of the double Darwin anniversary next year — 200 years since his birth and 150 years since the first publication of *Origin of Species* — activities are continuing to grow.

One of these is the publication of a new book *Darwin* (Andre Deutsch, ISBN: 978-0-233-00251-4, 2008), almost better described as a construction rather than a publication. Each two-page spread covers one aspect of Darwin's life and career, 30 in total. The pages are heavily illustrated with many contemporary pictures and sketches. But most notable are the inserts that accompany each spread. Many of these are facsimile copies of original Darwin documents, from his Cambridge college bills to scribbled notes as he tried to piece together his evolutionary ideas.

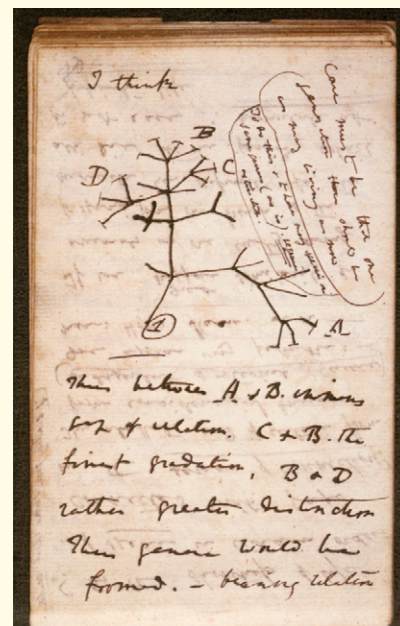
Maps from the *Beagle* and Darwin's illustrations of the geology of South American features are also some of the other facsimile material included.

The volume has the feel of an intimate scrapbook of many of the key events and documents in Darwin's life.

But it is more than just a scrapbook: the words are written by science historian, John van Wyhe. A distinguished Darwin scholar at Cambridge University, van Wyhe is also director of the major project to make the entire work of the evolutionary biologist available electronically. Darwin Online, the project title, recently announced the availability of all Darwin's private papers. van Wyhe is championing the project: "I think we might be on the verge of a new revolution in the study and appreciation of the work of Charles Darwin," he says.

The new book can only tempt the reader to further explore Darwin's massive written output, much of it little examined, now appearing at Darwin Online.

In addition to all the words, a new book also celebrates Darwin's garden, the small patch of land surrounding his home at Down House in Kent that provided the

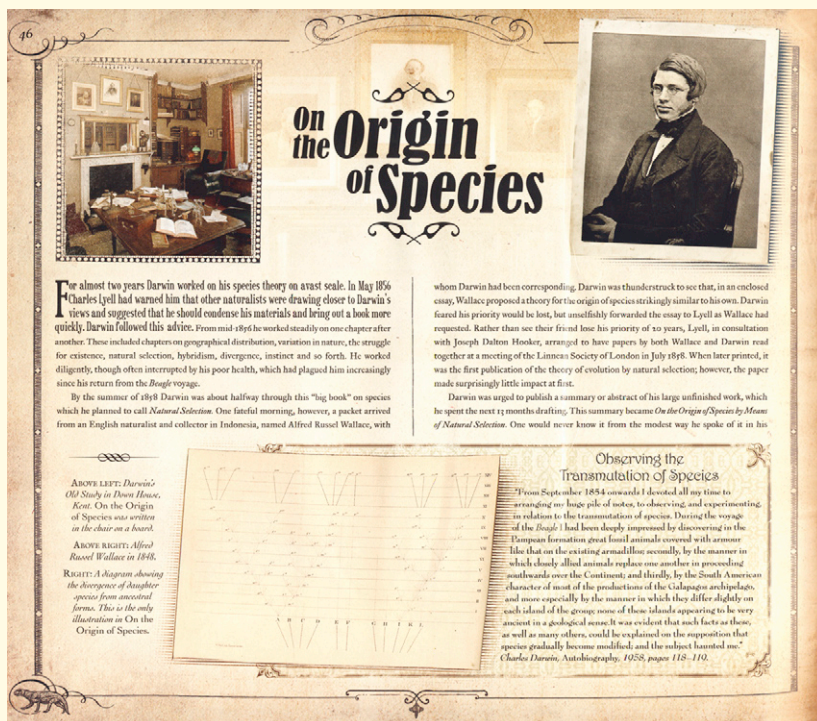


Pull-out: One of the many facsimile reproductions of key notes and documents included in the new book *Darwin*.

space and material for a surprising amount of his work. For more than 20 years he used the garden as his laboratory. In the orchard he conducted experiments on pollination and he built a dovecote where he could breed new strains of pigeons. And on his daily perambulation along his sandwalk he observed how plants competed for survival and in his greenhouse he carried out experiments on orchids and primulas. His lawn even revealed insight into human behaviour as he watched his children playing on it.

Michael Boulter, of the University of East London, reveals just how much the garden contributed to Darwin's work in *Darwin's Garden: Down House and the Origin of Species* (Constable and Robinson, ISBN: 978-1-84529-599-8, 2008).

English Heritage, the current owners of Down House, have been working to restore many features of the garden and are keen to show it off, little changed since Darwin's time, as a key feature of its anniversary celebrations next year.



Spread: A page of the highly illustrated new book *Darwin*.

Nigel Williams